

Short communication

First nesting record for Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* on the Kenyan coast

On 19 June 2004 I was conducting an ornithological survey with Colin Jackson in the Sabaki River Mouth area (03°09'S, 40°08'E). Approximately 3 km north of the river mouth, in an extensive sand dune area, we arrived at a large grassland patch which showed signs of heavy grazing. As we approached, five to six Collared Pratincoles *Glareola pratincola* took off, but instead of flying away stayed nearby or overhead making a repeated alarm call. As this was not normal behaviour we suspected they might be breeding and when one individual landed some 20 m from us and started a broken-wing display, we were even more sure of it. We decided to hide in a bush 50 m away from the site and watch to see if any bird returned to a nest.

Soon the birds relaxed and landed again on the grassland patch. Scanning across the site with a telescope, we noted one or two sitting facing down wind—a very unusual position for roosting birds which tend to face into the wind. One individual was only c.80 m away and was behaving very much as if on a nest. We therefore made a note of the spot and combed the area, eventually finding what we were looking for—a shallow, almost imperceptible hollow in the short grass with three eggs laid directly on the sand without any sign of nesting material. The eggs were a pale cream base-colour, heavily blotched with black and dark grey, more densely blotched on the more rounded end.

On 26 June 2004 I found another nest containing two eggs lying simply on open sand in the dunes that surround the grassland patch; they were half covered by the sand. This same day, the first nest was checked and it appeared to be as we had left it a week earlier. Another two nests were found on the 15 July 2004. One, containing two eggs, was in the sand dunes, sheltered on one side by a piece of dry cow dung. The other also had two eggs, laid in the sand beside some partially emerged roots. GPS co-ordinates were taken for all four nests.

Collared Pratincoles are known to occur regularly on the Kenyan coast from the Tana River Delta to the Sabaki River Mouth (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996, Lewis & Pomeroy 1989). East African breeding records are restricted to below 1500 m, mainly in low rainfall areas, especially at Murchison Falls National Park, Rwenzori Mountains National Park and Lakes Turkana, Magadi, Manyara and Rukwa (Britton 1980). The distribution maps in Urban *et al.* (1986) indicate that Collared Pratincoles breed, or probably breed, widely on the Kenya coast, but without reference to any supporting

records. However, more recently, Lewis & Pomeroy (1989) showed the species breeding in only seven squares: two in Amboseli, one in Tsavo East and five around Lake Turkana. Therefore this appears to be the first confirmed coastal breeding record for Kenya.

References

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